Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology

Volume 29
Issue 5 *January-February*

Article 3

Winter 1939

Criminal Types in Shakespeare

August Goll

CRIMINAL TYPES IN SHAKESPEARE

JUDGE AUGUST GOLL[1]

[Translated from the Danish by Julius Moritzen, 4003 Foster Avenue, Brooklyn, N. Y. Mr. Moritzen's translation will appear in three parts of which this is the second. The Translator's Note and a Foreword by Warden Lewis E. Lawes are published with the first part in the preceding number, XXIX, 4, pp. 492 ff.—Ed.]

Macbeth

From Brutus to Macbeth,—it is to leap from the heights of the ideal to the lowland of reality. It is at the same time the transition from the exceptional to the general rule; from the criminal as he can sometimes be, to the criminal as he ordinarily is.

Brutus is the noble form,

> whose honorable metal may be wrought
> From what it is disposed,

but which even in its distortion is exalted. The nature of Macbeth is more akin to that of the plain people. The key to such a character as his is found in Lady Macbeth's estimate:

> thou wouldst be great;
> Art not without ambition, but without
> The illness should attend it: what thou wouldst highly,
> That wouldst thou holily; wouldst not play false
> And yet wouldst wrongly win:

Is not this the ethics of the average character; to "wrongly win," and yet not "play false"? Life, after all, is a gamble, and the future is the stake. Then comes a time when the game is over, won or lost, but as long as the play lasts, emotionalism rules. All would like to win, generally by being honest. Card-sharpers fortunately are few. But the stake may be so big that even the most honest player "wouldst wrongly win." One may even consider whether he should not—just for once—make the move that he "wouldst not."

Those are the critical moments in life, and when they come the discovery is often made that honesty is but a relative concept.

The real man of honor is he who spurns the gaining of the greatest possible advantage through doing the slightest wrong, and

[1] Late Attorney General of Denmark.

who never gives a thought to the possibility that it can be done without detection. But there is a good deal of honor like that of Emilie's in Othello. They will not do dishonorable things for such trifles as a ring, some yards of finery, dresses, caps and the like, but for the whole world,—that is different. Then they are ready to commit wrongs, say a crime, particularly if there is a possibility that it can come off quietly. And when once this stage is reached, when crime ceases to be a mene tekel, then it is easy to go on from the very small crimes to the bigger, the very biggest, if in the same proportion the gain increases, and the risk does not become materially greater.

Those who become criminals on this basis are usually social beings. They would not play false on principle, but when the great advantage looms before them they occasionally compromise with their better "I." It is not their misfortune that they are worse than many others, but that in contrast to these others they for once in their lives are confronted with the possibility of winning the great prize. They fall before the temptation, and it is not wickedness, but weakness, that is the defect of their character. That is why crime becomes the great catastrophe in their lives. With one stroke it plunges them from a quiet, protected position into the anti-social wild and dangerous wave, where sooner or later weak natures like theirs are destroyed. It is this that Shakespeare pictures for us in Macbeth; the hostile penetration of temptation and crime into human lives that by virtue of their character and way of thinking would seem to be protected against the intruder, who nevertheless falls upon them with the cunning and strength of a beast of prey. Even if in Shakespeare we are some steps removed from daily existence, where crime ordinarily is at home, we see nothing different from what we ourselves often encounter; only that in Shakespeare we seem to look as if through a microscope which permit us to view events and movements with a clarity that daily existence seldom, if ever, affords us.

Macbeth is his country's highly deserving citizen who returns home as conqueror after having subdued the country's enemies, and who for his services can expect a royal reward.

> As thick as hail
> Came post with post, and everyone did bear
> Thy praises in his kingdom's great defense,
> And poured them down before him.

Busied with his duties, Macbeth has worked for the sake of his country's weal, not for reward, but when the task is finished, it is this that occupies his mind.

Rumors abound. In the guise of these rumors, the witches tell that Macbeth is to be proclaimed the successor to the King; something not very plausible, and yet not an impossible elevation, since Macbeth belongs to the country's foremost men and is a close relative to the King. The thought is no more distant than that it can be considered realized.

Other marks of distinction are named, symbolized in Macbeth's appointment as thane of Cawdor; an honor that Macbeth has not faith in as his, since the post is not vacant and the prospects are not in favor of it being so.

Then take place the most unexpected events; events of which Macbeth has had no knowledge. The thane is deposed, Macbeth is named in his place. This startles him. If the one thing is possible, so is the other. The appointment as thane of Cawdor, is it not given him

> for an earnest of a greater honor.

Possibly the "greatest is behind." There arises now in the mind of Macbeth that intolerable tension of anticipation in which the conception of so inexpressible a good fortune that is impossible to give it voice is on the point of strangulation for fear that the immense chance may go glimmering. It is the dread of this that

> doth unfix my hair
> And make my seated heart knock at my ribs,
> Against the use of nature? Present fears
> Are less than horrible imaginings.

Openly he tells himself that the very thought that this possibility should be "murdered,"

> is but fantastical,
> Shakes so my single state of man that function
> Is smother'd in surmise, and nothing is
> But what is not.

Torn by this violent unrest of apprehensive expectation he comes before the one who has the decision in his hand, the King. Here he receives the confirmation of his appointment as thane of Cawdor, but at the same time he learns that his great dream is not to be realized. Another is chosen as successor to the throne.

Macbeth's great disappointment in being cast down so abruptly

from the apex of his expectations makes as nothing all the other marks of distinction and promises. Formerly he could console himself by the kind of reasoning that comfort those who still have hope,

> If chance will have me king, why chance
> May crown me,
> Without my stir.

Now he realizes that in order to hope, it is for him to create that hope. A solid barrier has been placed before his prospects,

> that is a step
> On which I must fall down, or else o'erleap.

The obstruction must be removed, or all must be relinquished. To give up seems to him hardest of all. Whoever at one time or other has seen a great ambitious future before him does not easily reconcile himself to the prosaic existence of every day life. Once Macbeth's craving after his future has been aroused, it is not easily conquered:

> Stars, hide your fires;
> Let not light see my black and deep desires.

But to attain this ambitious goal, what roads lead there?

> The eye wink at the hand!

is his outcry. The way the hand, the instrument of the act, points, is so sinister that he dare not even see it. But his thought has conceived the way, and he knows that it is open to him. And he does not push this thought aside:

> Yet let that be,
> Which the eye fears, when it is done, to see.

The psychic condition in which a human being finds himself where he nurses a burning desire for something the realization of which seems open to him, and yet which he dare not take, is perhaps the most painful possible. Where no such means for a way out exists, the resolute individual will try to quiet his soul's desires, bid goodby to hope and sooner or later, after his mental convalescence, regain his constitutional equilibrium. If he does not possess this resolute character a man often joins those embittered, wry natures who in their very attitude toward humankind find a sort of comfort in the shipwreck of their happiness. He who does see a way out and dare not follow it,—no matter what ethical reasons present themselves,—he comes to doubt himself in his

innermost being. He finds himself in a condition of mental eruption where he can depend upon nothing; where the most solid foundations seem insecure; where ruin is a constant threat, and where even this ruin is not reliable enough to put an end to the doubt.

It is this interminable condition of doubt, the soul-misery of the irresolute, that Shakespeare with his matchless art, depicts for us in Hamlet. But Macbeth does not share Hamlet's fate. In his deep doubt and despondency a new element enters his mind, and it is this that gives the drama its particular interest.

This new element is the entrance of Lady Macbeth, her influence on Macbeth, her incitement to the crime. Already in Julius Caesar we find an instance of this incitement, the psychic influence: Cassius' declarations to Brutus. But this influence resulted mainly in awakening certain presentments and feelings that were favorable to Cassius' plans, while the more direct preliminaries were with Brutus himself.

In the case of Macbeth, a different method is essential. The question is to overcome his doubt; to make clear to him that the way out that he has seen faintly not only could be, but should be followed.

To properly estimate to what a degree the typical process of instigation by Lady Macbeth has attained it should be proper to examine somewhat closely what takes place when the phenomenon occurs that one person persuades another to do something that in reality is against that person's nature. It will be seen that it is by no means the case, as has been generally believed, that it is a question of superior ability, greater knowledge or shrewdness, but altogether a psychological technique. Where this is present, the lesser individual can very often exercise complete dominion over the greater; without this technique the greatest mind in the world will prove a complete failure as instigator, persuader, or as agitator in addressing a large crowd.

Let it first be said that the complete insensibility to the opinions and judgments of others that many believe themselves to be posssed of, very seldom exists, except in the case of the empty-minded, stupid individuals. As a matter of fact, the more agile the mentality, the more susceptible are almost all others to what people think and say, for the very reason that from the cradle to the grave we have built up our minds and thinking on what we have received from other persons through their words, their acts and their

examples. It is in the ability to blend what is received from without that the very talents reveal themselves; not in the manner in which the matter is conveyed to us. It is only the poorly-endowed who allow the material to pass them by unobserved and undigested. The richer natures seize the stuff, add it to their other mental capacity, blend the whole, and in this manner produce something new and surprising. The ordinary person does not get that far, he takes to himself only that which is similar with himself; everything else leaves no impression.

He is most susceptible to the suggestions of another who stands on the platform of doubt and indecisions, whose thoughts are in a constant flux from possibility to possibility, where one motive arrays itself against another motive. As his brain works for a way out of the indecision, the means presented through suggestion are likely to be preferred, provided it points in the right direction and comes at the right moment.

In turning again to the tragedy we first find Lady Macbeth in the act of reading Macbeth's letter in which he tells of the prophecy:

"This I have thought good to deliver thee, my dearest partner of greatness, that thou mightst not lose the dues of rejoicing, by being ignorant of what greatness is promised thee. Lay it to thy heart and farewell."

The words plainly tell Lady Macbeth that Macbeth attaches serious importance to the prophecy; that he does not intend to let it go by the board because of the hindrances that have arisen. Already in this there is a pointing to crime as the solution of the problem. Macbeth intimates for Lady Macbeth's consideration a way out; she, who stands closest to him, whose words have great weight with him, and who herself will enjoy the fruits of what is accomplished and bear the consequences with him.

Immediately she makes up her mind. Her only doubt is whether she can succeed in influencing Macbeth to take the same stand with the same bold resolve:

> yet do I fear thy nature;
> It is too full of the milk of human kindness
> To cast the nearest way: . . .
>
> That which cries 'Thus thou must do if you have it;
> And that which rather thou dost fear to do
> Than wishest should be undone.' Hie thee hither,
> That I may pour my spirits in thine ear,
> And chastise with the valour of my tongue

All that impedes thee from the golden round,
Which fate and metaphysical aid doth seem
To have thee crowned withal.

Then comes the meeting with Macbeth. Each slightest word in this scene has its deep meaning and must be viewed separately:

Lady Macbeth

Great Glamis! worthy Cawdor!
Greater than both, by the all-hail hereafter!
Thy letters have transported me beyond
This ignorant present, and I feel now
The future in the instant.

Macbeth

My dearest love,
Duncan comes here to-night.

Lady Macbeth

And when goes hence?

Macbeth

To-morrow, as he proposes.

Lady Macbeth

O, never
Shall sun that morrow see!
Your face, my thane, is as a book where men
May read strange matters. To beguile the time,
Look like the time; bear welcome in your eye,
Your hand, your tongue: look like the innocent flower
But be the serpent under't. He that is coming
Must be provided for: and you shall put
This night's great business into my dispatch;
Which shall to all our nights and days to come
Give solely sovereign sway and masterdom.

Macbeth

We will speak further.

Lady Macbeth

Only look up clear;
To alter favor ever is to fear:
Leave all the rest to me.

In his mental agitation Macbeth speaks in very short, abrupt sentences, as if his overwrought mind can find words only with the greatest difficulty. He is, therefore, in a peculiarly favorable con-

dition to accept suggestions. The very first words spoken by Lady Macbeth contain this powerful suggestion:

I feel now
The future in the instant.

That is, out of our present moment will the future develop, and Lady Macbeth's preceding reference to the "all-hail hereafter," and her mention of the letter, leave Macbeth in no doubt as to what she means by the word "future." That is, she had made her decision.

Based on this resolve the few words of Macbeth are of very great psychological importance, though they are of such double-meaning that they can scarcely be spoken but must be sensed.

At this stage Macbeth has by no means determined on the crime. It remains to him just what it was when he learned his fate in the royal castle: something dreadful that he glimpsed deep down in his consciousness as a monster that could come into the light of day; something that might happen to him; something that terrifies him and yet pulls him.

His very words show at once this complete irresolution, the pain it causes him; his yearning, because of this, to put an end to it. Hence his need of having another speak of that which might bring him peace. And therefore his first words, after a most perfunctory greeting:

Duncan comes here to-night.

The sentence means nothing by itself. It is the natural information about an event of concern to the home, and which both husband and wife should be greatly interested in. No meaning is divulged, and yet it contains a kind of answer to the wife's words about the present moment on which rests the future. It is as if Macbeth himself advanced the burning question; shall the present moment be utilized?

Lady Macbeth sees at once the double meaning of his words, and she is quick to run the probe into the soul of Macbeth by her counter question

And when goes hence?

Then Macbeth's carefully framed answer, a simple fact,

To-morrow, as he proposes.

But this time the indirect implication is plainly: shall what she proposes be realized? What is your opinion? Let me know.

Quick comes the answer of Lady Macbeth to Macbeth's thinking:

O, never
Shall sun that morrow see!

Then the encouragement of the crime in which she promises to assist, although in figurative words she speaks of the King as the guest for whom there must be care, and herself as the hostess on whom rests the duty of the hostess: the great task of the night. And she ends her speech, without direct reference to the crime, but indirectly voicing it by promising Macbeth "sovereign sway and masterdom."

Macbeth's final words show that he consents:

We will speak further.

Still, in his adherence to his wife's talk, his reserved admission and hope that when they "speak further" she will continue in the same dirction,—his decision is as yet held in abeyance.

But his words have still another double-meaning. Macbeth's ambiguity is nothing less than an expression of his own instigation, but reserving to himself full freedom of action. This psychic ability to create incitement, making the crime develop itself as if it were an independent creature born into the world, Shakespeare intimates by the liberty of action postulated by Macbeth in his every sentence. In his first words,

Duncan comes here to-night,

the reserve is clear enough. No interpretation can here positively associate Macbeth with the thought of crime. But already in the following words:

To-morrow, as he proposes,

there is sign of a weakening of the reservation. Finally, in

We will speak further,

there is no longer any reserve when viewed objectively. Macbeth's freedom of action is about to be abrogated. This time his words coincide with Lady Macbeth's criminal intent. The crime is about to come into the world.

We now witness the reciprocal action called forth by Lady Macbeth's incitement and Macbeth's permission for its advancement. It is an impulsive admission, and each retreat gives to Lady Mac-

beth a fresh impulse which again exerts its influence on Macbeth. Thus both parties are instigator and instigated, active and passive, influencing and is influenced, each one strengthened in resolve by the other.

How far their conversation has carried Macbeth toward the crime is seen from the succeeding monologue where he weighs one reason against another. From indistinct thinking and painful emotions he has arrived at the serious consideration whether to be "for or against." It is a definite sign that his thoughts have passed the twilight of hesitancy and have emerged into the light of day. In other words, the embryonic stage of his thinking is past.

One by one contrasting motives pass in review before him; the danger of the act, his duty as kin and friend and host; his obligations as a loyal subject, the sentiments of humaneness and sympathy, the good and lovable qualities of the King.

Against all of this, Macbeth can marshall only his ambition:

> I have no spur
> To prick the sides of my intent, but only
> Vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself
> And falls on the other.

No, this is Macbeth's only incentive when by himself. It is then the leaping ambition falls dying to earth, and he resolves,

> We will proceed no further in this business,

But in Lady Macbeth he possesses a further incentive that forces the leap. She no sooner becomes aware that her absence has allowed Macbeth to drink of "the milk of human kindness," and wrest from her hands the victory almost gained, than she resorts to the most powerful means of instigation.

Lesser psychologists than Shakespeare would probably have had Lady Macbeth counter Macbeth's opposition in a duel of logic, after she had first made clear to herself his ground for opposition. Shakespeare lets Macbeth expound his arguments in a monologue, and Lady Macbeth does not touch a single one of these, not even the one he puts squarely before her: regard for their good name, the honors won, the golden opinions,

> from all sorts of people,
> Which should be worn now in their newest gloss,
> Nor cast aside so soon.

Lady Macbeth has no need of having Macbeth's reasons for his opposition presented to her; she knows them all beforehand because

she understands Macbeth and is familiar with his reflections, which all and everyone are deductions from his fundamentally honest and socially thinking "I." For this reason she does not bother with them, but goes back of them, directs her attacks against this self-same "I;" attempts to touch the sentimental chords that lie closest to his heart, make them keep time with her own purpose.

At first she makes a mistake. She tries to treat him with scorn, calls him a coward:

> Wouldst thou have that
> Which thou esteem'st the ornament of life,
> And live a coward in thine own esteem,
> Letting 'I dare not' wait upon 'I would'
> Like the poor cat i' the adage?

Macbeth's dignified answer tells her that here he is too sure of himself to be affected:

> I dare do all that may become a man;
> Who dares do more is none.

It is then that Lady Macbeth tries a different way. She appeals to his sense of honor, in a most ingenious and diabolic manner she makes use of the very exposures Macbeth had made of himself in his letter and first conversation: You gave me the idea of this crime. It was you who incited me, because at that time you yourself wished to commit the crime, and succeeded in getting me with you. And what has happened since then? Just this; that the opportunity is at hand, the hour has arrived. Exactly the circumstance that the exceptional moment is here is the reason for your refusal.

Others besides Macbeth would have been caught in the logical trap that lies hidden back of Lady Macbeth's bold accusation.

Most people are inclined to trade their innermost, ideal striving and deep-felt need for the one sentence: If I were able, then I would without regard for any consequence do and say this or that. And the respective person actually means what he says, believes that he will act in that manner. But frequently this is only a covering. He knows very well that even if he could, he would not do it. As a matter of fact, he is in hope the moment will never come when he can do what he said he would do.

This "I can" is a word which impresses far and wide. Not only in daily affairs, but in the domain of politics, ethics and social relations it brings admirers and followers to the one who knows so

exactly what he will; that he only has to act to create liberty, progress, revolution or reaction. And then it happens that the moment arrives when he can act. And what then? Now that he "can," he does not want to. All was words, words, words! Few things are able to arouse disrespect as does such an attitude And the sense of honor which can stand undisturbed before the contempt it calls forth must be a particularly thick-skinned kind.

This is the scorn that Lady Macbeth flings in the face of Macbeth:

> What beast was't then
> That made you break this enterprise to me?
> When you durst do it, then you were a man;
> And, to be more than what you were, you would
> Be so much more the man. Nor time nor place
> Did then adhere, and yet you would make both:
> They have made themselves, and that their fitness now
> Does unmake you. I have given suck, and know
> How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me:
> I would, while it was smiling in my face,
> Have pluck'd my nipple from his boneless gums,
> And dash'd the brains out, had I so sworn as you
> Have done to this.

When in her anger Lady Macbeth here accuses Macbeth of having "sworn" to murder the King, her accusation, as a matter of fact, is far from the truth. But to a man like Macbeth, who as yet is a four square personality, a word and an oath mean the same thing. To himself he cannot deny that Lady Macbeth has been speaking his own secret thoughts. She made herself the spokesman for his thinking. He was the maker of the shots that she were to fire. And now that he can go ahead, he is no longer willing.

The whole manner of Macbeth's thinking, his character, his honor as a soldier is stirred by this spiritual cowardice. He gives in. He fails to realize in his present state of mind that his own sense of honor is used against him in its most terrible distortion in the service of crime. What is requested of him is that he shall let the evil sprouts grow up without hindrance, because the seed was planted in his heart, and that he must strangle the good sprouts because they interfere with the development of the evil plant. Every moral concept is thus turned topsy turvy. He does not see that what actually is happening is that he makes it a mortal duty to proceed against the anti-moral. He does not perceive this because it is the character of crimes to be the devil-mote in the eyes and

hearts of men. It is just the honorable and right in a person's character that transforms him into that which plunges him deepest down in misfortune; that which causes him to accept inner contradictions and disturbing concepts. Shakespeare gives it expression by making Lady Macbeth demand of Macbeth the utmost truthfulness, while at the same time she insists that he shall,

> look like the innocent flower
> But be the serpent under't.

But Macbeth does not even notice this contradiction. Lady Macbeth has known how to appeal to his sense of duty and holds him to that which is most sacred with him; faithfulness towards what he has once said and promised, even the thoughts that accompanied what he had said. It is not in Macbeth to get around his own words by artful interpretation.

Still, he ventures one more query, as

> If we should fail?

Lady Macbeth sees now that victory is within reach; that it is no longer the man of honor with whom she has to deal, but one filled with anxiety, and she places the responsibility upon him once more,

> We fail!
> But screw your courage to the sticking place,
> And we'll not fail.

There now follows the whole well-considered plan which cleverly enough Lady Macbeth has held in reserve. The time has arrived for having the figurative replaced by the unveiled speech:

> When in swinish sleep
> Their drenched natures lie as in a death,
> What cannot you and I perform upon
> The unguarded Duncan? what not put upon
> His spongy officers, who shall bear the guilt
> Of our great quell?

Macbeth at last experiences that relief which comes with a decision. All his fear and unrest are as blown away. Enthusiastically he cries out to his wife:

> Bring forth men-children only;
> For thy undaunted mettle would compose
> Nothing but males.

Her plan now appears to him so easy of execution; so safe to put into operation:

> Will it not be received
> When we have marked the blood with those sleepy two
> Of his own chamber, and used their very daggers,
> That they have done't?

His decision is made:

> I am settled, and bend up
> Each corporal agent to this terrible feat.

Then follows the deed.

The thing, of course, does not turn out as easy as Macbeth anticipated in the first flush of his decision. The very deed reveals how far removed is a nature like Macbeth's from the murder to which he has been led through the most crafty incitement. Even before the execution of the deed he has visions that terrorize him, and immediately after he has halucinations of his hearing:

> it cried 'sleep no more' to all
> the house,
> 'Glamis had murder'd sleep.'

His horror and fear during the very act paralyzes his thinking to the extent that he forgets the danger in which he is placed, and by a destructive "amen" nearly reveals his presence to those near by. He is only saved because his muscles are so affected that he has difficulty in saying the word.

Trice does Lady Macbeth save the insensible man from discovery. She puts the murderous instrument where they should be, she removes the blood stains, she succeeds at the last moment to get him away from the scene. She is both the mind and the hand. The half-conscious Macbeth could never alone have been equal to the task. But neither could Lady Macbeth, this terrible fury of crime, have been able to carry out the work by herself:

> Had he not resembled
> My father as he slept, I had done't.

Both the will and the opportunity were hers, the very things that she upbraided Macbeth for that he could not make use of. But she herself had not the courage to lift her hand against the sleeper. Only with Macbeth's aid could the deed be accomplished. He who was nothing without her, was also all to her. Supporting each other's trembling hands they venture through the darkness.

From the two harmonizing wills there emanates a new element, qualitively differing from them both: This it is that carries out the murder of Duncan.

Lady Macbeth

Feminine criminality is one of the social phenomena that present-day criminologists are giving especially close attention, and which affords them much speculation. Woman is always a mystery and a surprise. As Ferri has it, she distinguishes herself by going counter to all the rules as it concerns criminology.

The fact is that if the same regulations were to govern her which in some respects are excusable in male criminality, then woman ought to be more criminally inclined than man. The exact contrary, however, is the case.

Feminine criminality is from four to seven times less pronounced than man's. On an average, woman is much less of an egoist; she is more altruistic than the man, much better at heart, more sacrificing. By virtue of her position as mother she is more closely bound to family life and family tradition. Generally she is more religious, even more national than man, and she has far greater respect for public opinion. Every social, moral, juridical "you must not" she respects and takes for granted, where the man may rebel against authority and pressure. Finally, she is not so exposed to the influences that so easily make the man close his eyes to the commandments, even in cases where he is not disposed to do so. Woman, on the whole, has fewer requirements than has man, and consequently is not so susceptible to the power of association and strong drink.

It is seen, then, that it is usually the women who have drifted away from the traditional family life or lead a secluded existence who join the criminal ranks; women who have come to live the lives of men and taken on their inclinations constitute the majority of the feminine criminals. In agreement with this we find that it is in the countries where woman's equality with man in the battle of existence is most advanced that we find the higher percentage of feminine criminals. As this equality becomes more and more general, we may expect that the criminality of man and woman will also tend in the direction of equality, in that the peculiar womanly qualities, which have heretofore been her protection, will diminish in the same degree that the common criminal impulses will

increase. That is—if woman does not again appear as a surprise that defies all the rules!

Until this development has destroyed what remains of an ancient tradition we can still reckon with those special feminine qualities and their logical opposite, the typical feminine crimes. These qualities, which with one word we may term womanly altruism, to a very great extent prevent women from committing crimes where in men these crimes have their origin in brutal and reckless, or cunning and disingenuous selfishness. Since most crimes spring directly from such fundamental motives it is clearly seen that the feminine crime is comparatively rare. As an offset to this, feminine altruism exposes woman to the committing of crimes for the sake of others, and this, while not common, nevertheless is not without importance in the geneology of crime.

Those are the crimes designated as typically feminine. But to fully understand the meaning it is essential to indicate clearly who are those "others." These "others" may reasonably be said to be the whole of mankind. History records its female as well as its male martyrs. The "others" for whose sake the feminine crime is committed are the same whom the specific qualities benefit, that is the husband, lover or child. Their happiness is her all. Insofar as she is able to let herself become possessed of an all-embracing feeling, their social and individual progress is the all-absorbing interest of her existence. What benefits them, takes precedence over everything else.

If the advantage is of overwhelming importance to those "others," and if the situation so shapes itself that she can gain this advantage, even though a crime be necessary, then she can commit this crime with much greater ease than can a man under similar circumstances. She does not commit the crime with a guilty conscience or as an ordinary criminal. She has the proud conviction that she is acting correctly, nobly, because she feels within herself that it is not for her own benefit; that she acts from the best of motives, to give that "other" the best of which she is able to give. She does not consider for an instant the disaster she causes. What are other interests in comparison with those she wants to serve?

While this typical feminine crime may not often be encountered in the great cultural centers of today we need but turn the pages of history to find numerous examples. If we venture but a short distance away from these centers we still find the conditions motivating feminine crimes in full bloom.

In Shakespeare we frequently find these typical feminine criminals. In Cymbeline she commits a crime for the benefit of the son; in Lear we see her act for the benefit of the lover. In Macbeth her labors concern the husband. Of these three instances, Lady Macbeth is by far the most interesting and conclusive.

It is quite true that the general conception of Lady Macbeth is not built on the characteristics here advanced. Commonly she is looked upon as a she-devil over whom the moral forces, fortunately, gain a decisive victory. What spurs her on is greed for power. Her driving force are arrogance and conceit. She assuredly deserves her fate when, all too late, she dies insane in the fifth act of the play.

This conception of Lady Macbeth's character may be the nearest at hand, but whoever has occupied himself somewhat with Shakespeare knows also that the nearest-at-hand concept of his words and characters far from always represent his real meaning. Not seldom he gives his characters a kind of double aspect, an outer one for the broader, uncritical public that only cares for what happens, not why it happens,—and an inner, of which the key to the character's real nature is hidden secretly. Does not Lady Macbeth belong in the latter category?

Let it be emphasized at the start that at no place in the drama does Lady Macbeth indicate power and preferment as something attractive and tempting to and for herself. Shakespeare does not suggest in any way that the possibility of her becoming queen is in itself a matter of gratification to her, nor, does the tragedy contain a rival that she would outshine by being raised to so high a place of honor. Even in her monologues, where she has no reason to hide her real motives it is not her interests but Macbeth's that are her concern. She will oppose,

> All that impedes thee from the golden round
> Which faith and metaphysical aid doth seem
> To have thee crowned withal.

And she says:

> Glamis thou art, and Cawdor, and shalt be
> What thou art promised.

Only in one place,—in the first instigation scene,—does she employ the word "we" when mentioning the forthcoming elevation, and this in the most natural connection, since both are to work together toward the same goal, and therefore would share in the

reward. In the place where the word "we" appears it is exactly the expression of Lady Macbeth's solidarity with Macbeth, not a desire for personal advantage.

As for Macbeth, his terse sentences often contain some turns that show how closely he feels himself bound to his wife. To him she is his all, and he often employs endearing terms, as for instance when he calls her his "dearest chick." Lady Macbeth, on her part, shows in her conversation with Macbeth a deep and genuine admiration; an admiration which is natural enough before this famous and highly honored man whose deserving fame is so great that messages keep arriving about his successes "as thick as hail." Macbeth is to her really "the noble husband," the great Glamis and the no less great Cawdor. In the joy of her pride before her husband's distinction no elevation for him is too great in her estimation. What would have been more natural, then, that he should have been chosen the future ruler of the kingdom? Was it not a disgraceful slight that the young, unknown Malcolm was preferred to her own famous husband?

Macbeth's letter tells her that he himself by no means is a stranger to the thought that he could of himself obtain what fate denied him, and she is immediately ready to stand by him. As she sees it, it is only his right that he wants to assert,—perhaps not the legal right of which she, as so many other women, has slight knowledge,—but the right which in her eyes means so much more; the right of his greatness. It is for this reason that she becomes so indignant when at the last moment Macbeth wavers and draws back from the act which alone can give him what in her opinion he has an absolute right to have. This is why she puts her whole mind and energy to the accomplishing of what she is fully convinced rightfully belongs to him.

As a matter of fact, her final decision to commit the murder is by no means as easy a thing as it seems. Murder is always a serious and loathsome matter, especially to a woman. Violent and sanguinary deeds are, on the whole, very distasteful to women. Lady Macbeth's wild invocations show she had to combat her womanly feelings when she cried out,

> Come you spirits
> That tend on mortal thought, unsex me here,
> And fill me, from the crown to the toe, top-full
> Of direst cruelty! make thick my blood,
> Stop up the access and passage to remorse, . . .

. . . Come thick night,
And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell,
That my keen knife see not the wound it makes—

This is not the state of mind of a person for whom crime is an easy thing when that is the only means for attaining a desired end. But it is Macbeth's future that is at stake and lies closest to her heart. His elevation is her goal, and in the consciousness of this she finds her mental strength with which to accomplish the deed. This also it is which gives her that unbelievable calmness with which she covers up the murder and fills her with the conviction that nothing else counts against the interests she has to protect. To what amounts the dead King—he was but the obstacle to that which she was striving after—hence he had to die. How can his corpse cause her terror:

the sleeping and the dead
Are but as pictures: 'tis the eye of childhood
That fears a painted devil.

Again, what are the innocent attendants in comparison with the goal that beckons her husband,

If he do bleed
I'll gild the faces of the grooms withal,
For it must seem their guilt.

Convinced that she has accomplished a heavy task, and a difficult one, and that because of this it should be appreciated and be met with joy and thankfulness when finished, she is filled with astonishment and is well nigh disgusted with Macbeth when she sees his bewildered and terrified appearance after the murder:

I shame
To wear a heart so white. . . .
. . . Be not lost so poorly in your thoughts.

Lady Macbeth feels as does the warrior after the battle fought and won for the honor and glory of the family. What warrior stands pale and trembling after the dangers of the conflict are past? She is like the woman of the saga who kills the general of the hostile army in the denseness of the night and thus saves her country. Does she not, then, deserve to be honored by the one who is to her "her country," Macbeth, now that the great purpose has been attained? What reason is there to mourn the fact that the enemy has been destroyed?

It is otherwise with Macbeth. As men view these things, he knows that to carry the family feud into the midst of peaceful society cannot go unpunished, especially when considering the

means employed. He realizes that he has committed a wrong that cries to heaven, that from now on he is looked upon as an enemy of society; that the crime is not only against the dead one, but against mankind, therefore,

> If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well
> It were done quickly . . .
> . . . that but this blow
> Might be the be-all and the end-all here,
> But here, upon this bank and shoal of life,
> We'ld jump the life to come. But in these cases
> We still have judgment here; that we but teach
> Bloody instructions, which being taught return
> To plague the inventor; this even-handed justice
> Commends the ingredients of our poison'd chalice
> To our own lips.

It is the social retribution that is Macbeth's fear, and here is seen the great difference between his own and Lady Macbeth's attitude toward the crime. Against her viewpoint of the family rights, he places his, which concerns society. The development of the drama and its chief features rests on this conflict between the idealistic and the strictly material in the two concepts.

When suddenly a great change takes place in the life of an individual he seldom escapes the realization that he has become, as it were, a different person;—nearly always of less worth than formerly. Very often, however, this apparent change depends upon the fact that a wealth of new motives have entered the person's life and which now determine his actions.

To understand the nature of the changes that take place in the case of Macbeth and his wife after the crime has been committed and the aim attained, the new motives must be considered first of all. One would think that the elevation to the throne and the many new impressions and events in consequence thereof would quickly erase the recollection of what had happened. That this is not so is due to the fact that something wholly foreign entered the life of the really honest Macbeth, something so hostile to his innermost "I" that he simply cannot incorporate it into his individuality. The crime is just this new thing. It stands before him with such might that it blots out all other current impressions and possibilities. That he could have committed this horrible deed terrorizes him beyond all measures, and he has constantly before him the thought that there exists somewhere one who carries "stern justice's" sword of retribution to make him pay for what he has done. He not only fears men, but beasts, even lifeless nature:

Stones have been known to move and trees to speak
Augures and understood relations have
By maggot-pies and choughs and rooks brought forth
The secret'st man of blood.

The constant fear in which Macbeth lives causes him to cry out:

But let the frame of things disjoint, both the worlds suffer,
Ere we will eat our meal in fear, and sleep
In the affliction of these terrible dreams
That shake us nightly;

He sees danger in the most innocent utterings. The least disobedience, the weakest opposition makes him fearful. Could it be that retribution lies in wait for him there? It is this that drives him from violence to violence as a kind of self-defense,—from the murder of Duncan to that of Banquo, and as he seems to be unable to reach Macduff, to the murder of the latter's innocent wife and children.

The slightest suspicion is enough to bring his blood-laden executioner's ax into action until it goes so far that it is said of his rule that on each morning are heard the crying of widows, the sobbing of the fatherless, with new accusations rising to the heavens.

And now Lady Macbeth. What new motives manifest themselves with her, and how do they affect her? Not for a moment does she look upon the crime in any other way than when it was completed. She appears to have dismissed the whole affair from her mind in view of the ease with which it was accomplished. The whole thing was necessary in her opinion. Nor does it matter to her that Macbeth commits fresh misdeeds. As this was necessary to the upholding and strengthening of Macbeth's increased greatness, she is not one to let this disturb her night's rest.

What does affect her, however, is the sight of the man whom she worships ready to go to his destruction through despair and pangs of conscience which drive him to commit further outrages, which, instead of bringing security, only add to his misery.

This it is that troubles her:

How now, my lord! why do you keep alone
Of sorriest fancies your companions making
Using those thoughts which indeed have died.

And with a sigh she expresses her deep grief:

'Tis safer to be that which we destroy
Than by destruction dwell in doubtful joy.

It matters little to her that Macbeth with loving care excludes her from the murder of Banquo; he adds immediately that evil must be furthered by what evil has begun. He indicates plainly that it was the original crime that she instigated which now evolved the consequences. Little does it matter that he tells her of the murder of Macduff's wife and children after the deed is done; did not she sow the seed that has sprung up? Such a plant can bear but one kind of fruit: destruction.

For a while Lady Macbeth struggles desperately to keep up appearances, as for instance during the banquet where Banquo's ghost shows itself before Macbeth. Here she is at her wits' end to cover up the inner distractions of Macbeth that show themselves in wild outbreaks, and her entire efforts are directed to having him preserve a semblance of deportment. This show of appearance is only half successful. The guests let on that they believe the King is suffering from a passing touch of sickness, while they cannot be in the least doubt that he is a marked man.

Lady Macbeth has to stand by and see her husband sink deeper and deeper into the mental abyss. He seeks relief for his malady among the most terrible powers of darkness. He no longer weighs his plans, as to whether his misdeeds will cause him harm. He sees relief from punishment only in striking blindly at anything that confronts him. The eradication of the last weak voice of conscience is all that holds out any promise to him.

Macbeth is now but a monster, a wild beast of prey that it is society's duty to strike down. And on the frontier is already gathering the army that is to prove his undoing.

Because in her indescribable unhappiness over all that has taken place Lady Macbeth fails to understand what is passing through the mind of her husband, she is finally overwhelmed by her misfortune. It is not repentance from which she suffers. Any insinuation of that kind is left to her surroundings. If the crime had been committed in the flush of passion, repentance might have followed in time. But she acted because of something that constituted her very being, to give Macbeth the best of which she was capable, and having the will to do, she does not even now waver a second. Without the least compunction she would again murder Duncan if it had to serve her end.

It is only when she finds that there is not a plank in sight to carry her shipwrecked husband safely to shore that her thoughts no longer look forward but of themselves reach back to past happenings. Like a caged animal which before the iron bars continues

its rounds, so her thoughts return again and again to the point from where have sprung all her misfortunes: the murder of Duncan. Her dreams turn into endless broodings. She leads, as it were, a double-existence, a certain sign that her soul sense is on the point of dissolution. Constantly on the guard against those who watch her every look and word, she spends her nights in trying to solve her eternal problem with such intensity that she has hallucinations and translates her dream-pictures into action.

Lady Macbeth does many strange and curious things. She repeatedly washes her hands. What does it mean?

It is the word that Macbeth uttered when after the murder he gazed at his bloody hands:

This is a sorry sight!

In her somnambulistic state she constantly sees this word before her. Before this she repeated thoughtlessly after Macbeth:

A foolish thought; 'say a sorry sight.'

Now she realizes that back of this word lies the answer to the riddle.

To Macbeth it meant that the crime had now entered into his life in such a way that it could never be gotten rid of. His honorable career had been eternally disgraced; his shield stained. From being the upholder of social order, he had become the enemy of it all. The die was cast.

But to Lady Macbeth all the past was but a stain that could be washed out! But it could not be washed out; not from his hand, which was becoming more and more sanguinary, nor from hers, which had guided him to nothing but suffering,, torment and crimes.

Why could this little spot not be removed? Why could not all the scents of Araby take from this little hand the smell of blood? What curse had entered their lives with this blood stain? Why did this one spot bring so many others in its train? What made Macbeth spoil every thing by his frightened behavior? Why is he so pale? What has been done cannot be undone.

Passing on the threshold of insanity, Lady Macbeth dies without having her questions answered. She was crushed by the social powers which destroyed her most precious possessions. But she herself never understood that these powers meant justice, the rights of all before the little narrow world which was to her the center of the universe.

She committed her crime for the sake of another individual; the crime crushed her through this other. This, as a rule, is the lot of the typical woman criminal.